

EDITORIAL

PUBLICISING NEW SPECIES TO BRITAIN

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Introduction

Many entomologists eventually find species that turn out to be new additions to the British list. Obviously some species will have been overlooked in the British fauna and come to light through taxonomic revision. Some will be found in old existing collections. Others will be found from new fieldwork and may have been overlooked (i.e. always been here) or have recently arrived.

The following is not about describing species new to science, for which the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature should be followed.

I believe it is important to publish new additions as soon as possible after they are first found, especially if they are the result of recent fieldwork. How else can we track the possible establishment and subsequent distribution?

Remember that there is a legal obligation to report to the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (a division of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) any species that might be injurious to plant health (see paper by Cannon *et al.*, *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History*, 14: 90–91). In turn PHSI should assist entomologists and themselves by publishing details quickly of any species that they have found in the UK. It should also be remembered that the publication of a new species to Britain is not only of interest in Britain. Entomologists outside the UK will subsequently become aware of the new record and be able to use the information themselves.

Is it new to Britain?

The decision that a species is new to the British list may have followed a long trail of detective work: checking a variety of reference works from different parts of continental Europe (and beyond), consulting colleagues, and comparing specimens. Then what? At best a paper would be published summarising all the work done to date and presenting it for others to use. It may be announced at a meeting, perhaps presented at a BENHS evening meeting or the Annual Exhibition, and written up briefly but not in detail. Worse, nothing happens or the follow-up publication never happens.

Checklist of requirements for publication

Sometimes the collector may be unsure of how to present the detail of the capture. The following is a brief checklist of what I believe ought to be published about each species that is added to the British checklist.

Context

How well is the British fauna known in the group to which the new species is being added? Are there any recent checklists or keys? Is this a species likely to have recently arrived and become established or one that is likely to have been overlooked in the British fauna? Is it a casual importation that is unlikely to survive here?

Where was the species found?

The locality, habitat type and the date and circumstances of the discovery should be given.

Are there similar British species and how do they differ? A key should be given if appropriate. How does the species differ from others in the same genus (if there are some)? If a new genus and species how do the genera differ? Basically the question to be answered is "How can I identify the species again without the use of other literature?" Yes, of course keen amateurs will likely have accumulated or have access to key literature published outside the UK but a description of a new British species should ideally be as complete as possible without the need to refer directly to other sources.

Give drawings of the species to illustrate the differences

Some say that they cannot draw or do not have the facilities. I do not see any special problem in adapting some existing drawings (with reference and acknowledgement to the source). Permission to use existing copyrighted illustrations can be asked of journal publishers. It is unlikely that fees would be charged for scientific use.

Distribution of the species elsewhere, biology and known host plants

It is helpful to know where the species is found in its distribution elsewhere (whether or not it is likely to have arrived recently or been overlooked). Any biological information should be reviewed.

Deposition of the specimens

There is no obligation to deposit voucher specimens of new British species in National Museums (unlike type specimens of species new to science). However, I strongly believe that such significant specimens should not reside in personal collections and should be lodged in Museums and publicly accessible collections. The paper should indicate where specimens have been lodged.

My thanks to Alan Stewart (University of Sussex), Peter Barnard (BMNH) and Andrew Halstead (Royal Horticultural Society, Wisley) for helpful comments.

Editor's Note

The draft article on publicising species new to Britain by Mike Wilson was circulated to several entomologists and they in turn have expressed their views. The points made by Dr Chris Malumphy were more substantial and so have been published in the form of a reply. If others wish to submit their comments to the journal then the Editor will be pleased to publish them. As one who believes in the advice that "a picture paints a thousand words", the inclusion of an illustration seems obvious. One only has to try imagining how to juggle with the mental images of text, say, describing two similar Carpet moths, when one illustration or photograph does the trick. Our eyes can often pick out critical secondary features that add to "the jizz of an insect", that are not mentioned, or at least, highlighted in species' descriptions.

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